DOCUMENTARY

NEWS LETTER JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1947 ONE SHILLING

IN THIS ISSUE: Why No Labour Films?; Documentary Radio; UNESCO Gets Going; Films and Medicine; News from Egypt and Malaya; Documentary Film Reviews; First Days of Documentary; Films and Micro-biology; Documentary Theatre; Notes of the Month

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NOW IS THE TIME

In the field of public information there can be little doubt that the outstanding event of recent months is the UNESCO Conference in Paris. Matters 'educational, scientific and cultural' are the bricks with which the edifice of international understanding will eventually be built, and this latest attempt to lay down foundations is at once modest and imaginative—modest from financial compulsion and imaginative from the devotion and optimism of most of the delegates. An account of the programme of action in Mass Media which was adopted in Paris will be found elsewhere in this issue. In its insistence that help should be given to peoples ill-supplied with the means of mass communication it supports an old-established doctrine of the documentary movement; and in its references to the world-wide distribution through all appropriate media of informational themes of outstanding international significance, it touches upon a possibility which has long been a documentary pipe-dream—the possibility that One World might, in times of crisis and need, be stimulated to think as one.

The British documentary film-makers who attended the Paris Conference in one capacity or another were stimulated (as they had been also during the course of the British Film Festival in Prague) to find that the post-war re-establishment of contact with fellow workers reveals a fortifying identity of view as to future needs and as to the contribution which the documentary method can make towards meeting them, not only in the field of film but in the whole area of information.

The documentary method—the 'creative treatment of actuality', as John Grierson defined it, is for international use on all class levels. It is as appropriate to the self-articulation of a leper colony as to the collaboration of Governments. Also it is for use in all appropriate media. Film is the medium which in the pioneering days lay handiest; it was adopted and, as a consequence, much critical attention has been concentrated upon it which might in part have been directed to comparable developments in other media.

The UNESCO 'Feature-story' project is a reminder that the Press not infrequently presents the story behind the spot news with all the dramatic and aesthetic devices of considered narrative and, in doing so, gives what might have been an ephemeral piece of reporting the deeper and more prolonged impact of literature. In literature itself there have been and will continue to be 'documentary' novels, where the lover and his lass take on the no less dramatic mantles and the enhanced stature of the world and his wife.

In this issue of *DNL* we draw special attention to the achievements of the documentary method in two other media—the theatre and radio. Montagu Slater writes of the creative treatment of actuality on the stage and Laurence Gilliam deals with feature production—that side of BBC work which has paralleled the development of the documentary film more closely than is generally realized.

The documentary film has learned from both these other media. The 'Living Newspaper' stage technique which made its debut in New York in the second half of the nineteen-thirties today demonstrates its persisting influence in such films as *World of Plenty* and *Land of Promise*, just as the multi-voiced commentaries of documentary and the unrehearsed screen interview are not oblivious of the achievements of the cameraless microphone.

Stage and radio, too, have borrowed from screen documentary and have often employed almost identical stories; and this is as it should be. Given adequate purpose in the theme, the particular medium employed can be left to derive from material circumstances. Aesthetes may object to this insistence on the pre-eminence of purpose, but let them in that case read the UNESCO programme. Here is a job to be done, urgent enough, exciting enough and potentially rewarding enough to encourage us to postpone for a while yet our trip to the end of the rainbow of art for art's sake, and to get busy instead with the employment of the documentary method wherever it is appropriate; and for social purposes which cannot wait for the arrival of the Muse.

NOTES OF THE MONTH

The Role of Documentary

IN the Cobb Lecture to the Royal Society of Arts (part of which we reprint on a later page), Sir Stephen Tallents referred in his concluding remarks to the present position and significance of the documentary film. Amongst other things he made the following points, which we feel to be worth wider circulation:

'The outstanding factor is the growing importance of documentary. This is no place to discuss, in any but a few sentences, why the arts of public interpretation have in the last decade suddenly assumed such importance. There is no need in the closing months of 1946 to stress the extreme need for better understanding between the world's peoples. The opening words of the constitution of UNESCO put it well—"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed". Within the British Commonwealth the need for better interpretation is surely even more urgent today than it appeared to the EMB when it started its work twenty years ago last May—and is still inadequately faced. Within our own coasts we have to meet the demand for helping a greatly increased electorate to understand what is being done, and what is proposed to be done, in their name and for their benefit by central and local government; to understand, too, the co-operation that is required of them. I am not clear that this need is even now clearly and imaginatively grasped in Whitehall. In local government, if you had met, as I did last Whit Monday, some 700 members of the National Association of Local Government Officers for a discussion of public relations, you would have understood how great was the need and how keen the desire to meet it among those who serve our local authorities. We still have the problem of making the fruits of scientific research more promptly available to those who should profit by them. We have unlimited opportunities of visual education and training. Each of these broad territories could be broken up into many specialized fields. In every one of them the documentary film, so largely independent of differences of language, so compelling to all of us who depend upon the eyes and the imagination, has a unique part to fill.'

Relations with Czechoslovakia

IN film circles generally and certainly for those British personnel who were present the outstanding professional event of 1946 was the Festival of British Films in Prague. The understanding and hospitality with which the British representatives were received has already become legendary and it is likely that the positive results achieved will be found to have significance outside the field of films. Plans are far advanced to hold in London a festival of Czech films and, although we are unlikely to equal the magnificence of the earlier occasion, it is to be hoped that the British Foreign Office and the film industry will realize that they are operating in the fertile and fateful field of international public relations.

Tyranny of the Dollar

'CAN the French film industry survive the agreement between the French and American Governments, and remain as an instrument of national expression for the French people?'

This question was raised by Hollywood's Screenwriters' Guild as soon as the terms of the French-American loan agreement were made known in July, 1946, and formed the basis of a very instructive correspondence between the Guild and Eric Johnston, president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America. The following points emerge. The agreement passed a heavy sentence on French film-making, a fact that has received far too little publicity. French producers who asked for additional protection in the home market in the post-war period have in fact been given less than before. Before the war they produced some 120 feature films a year; they even managed to turn out 70 films a year during the occupation. Now they are screwed down to a probable maximum of 48, while Hollywood is free to bring in every American film dubbed into French. In return the wide open spaces of the United States are made as easy of access to the French as the moon. So much for Johnston's statement that 'the moving purpose behind the agreement was the desire to promote the ideal of world unity by removing some of the restrictions which isolate one nation from another'.

The violent reactions which the agreement produced in France have been equally inadequately reported in the press. The Screenwriters' Guild in their letter to Johnston quote a number of leading French film people, condemning the agreement and calling for its immediate revision. They did not mince their words. 'Hollywood has obtained from the representatives of France what the Nazis would never have dared ask of us during the occupation.'

Acts and Action

THE new Films Act is due at the end of this year. The various sections of the film trade have already prepared their several proposals for new legislation, while Hollywood is doubtless devising its stratagems. In the meantime the Board of Trade continues its attempt to improvise stop-gap measures. One of the principal problems is to give independent producers, of documentary as well as feature films, greater access to the screens. Whether steps like the recent setting up of a Government sponsored film selection board to arrange circuit distribution for 18 independently produced feature films a year, will have any real effect remains to be seen. At least it shows that the Board of Trade is alive to some of the implications of monopoly, so fully analysed in the Cinematograph Film Council's Report of 1944 on Tendencies to Monopoly. The least satisfactory aspect of such arrangements is the way they are made to depend on the courtesy of the big film combines. The agreement which Dalton concluded with the circuits in 1944 limiting their further expansion was purely a gentlemen's agreement resulting from an exchange of letters. When challenged on this point Government spokesmeh have repeatedly stated that further and more definite action must wait on the introduction of more comprehensive legislation when the new Films Act is framed. Now then is the time to be taking them at their word and to be thinking of the measures which can be introduced in 1948 to ensure that the public has more opportunity of seeing in the cinemas the better films that are or can be produced.

D.N.L. Changes

Documentary News Letter welcomes to its Editorial Board Sinclair Road, organizing secretary of the Federation of Documentary Film Units. Road belongs to the younger generation of documentary workers but already has made his mark. He is respected both in the counsels of the important documentary production companies of which his Federation is composed and amongst the officials of the bodies with whom the Federation negotiates. He has recently published some effective articles on documentary problems which add freshness to the more tradition-ridden effusions of his older colleagues.

At the same time we must reluctantly remove from our list of Board members the name of Arthur Elton who retires, temporarily we hope, to pursue his Film Centre duties in Germany. Elton, acting on behalf of the Central Office of Information, is to take charge of film affairs in the British zone of Occupied Germany. For the greater part of 1946 Elton was representing Film Centre in Copenhagen where he was invited to advise the Danish Government in the production of a group of documentaries which will shortly be available for international distribution.

UNESCO'S WORLD PLANS

Programme of work in the Mass Media—Films, Radio and Press

UNESCO's plans for film, radio and Press have been evolved with due regard to two essential factors. Firstly, an admittedly slender budget, and, secondly, the incontrovertible fact that *no international organization can succeed unless it is backed fully and on the most practical level by the Governments of the member States and by groups and organizations within the member States.*

The programme is therefore divided into three sections:

A: Projects for 1947 (in order of priority).
B: Stimulation.
C: Direct Services.

A: Projects for 1947 (in order of priority)

(1) 'As a first and pressing measure', the appointment of three **Commissions on Immediate Technical Needs,** to find out what is required as regards raw materials (film-stock, cameras, projectors, radio transmitters and receivers, printing machinery, pulp, paper, etc.) by countries in Europe and the Far East which have been hard hit by the war. *These Commissions will report by June* 1947, *with proposals for immediate action, and long-term plans for ensuring continuous improvements in the supply to 'Have Not' countries of equipment and technical personnel.*

At the same time UNESCO will institute a scheme under which countries with the best technical resources in the Mass Media will help the less-favoured countries by training guest-personnel in the various fields. The host countries (or, if they refuse, UNESCO itself), will do this by means of fellowships set up either by Government or non-Government bodies.

(2) A comprehensive report on obstacles to the free world-flow of information and ideas. This will be carried out in co-operation with the Commission on Human Rights, and will deal with 'all restrictions on the flow of information and ideas across international boundaries, and with the suppression and distortion of information and ideas by any influence.'

(3) **Surveys of the Mass Media.** A UNESCO-appointed Committee of Experts will study—according to the real needs of all peoples—the current proposals for a World Radio network. UNESCO will also undertake a **1947 Survey on Press and Films,** making a factual analysis of their present world structure. As regards films, the Survey's terms of reference will include (*a*) *Themes and distribution of films, both features and shorts;* (*b*) *Content and subject matter of newsreels;* (*c*) *Recent techniques for using films, film-strips and related visual media, with special emphasis on education, on the discussion of social relationships, on the appreciation of the arts, and on rural needs;* (*d*) *Possibilities of improving the sound film so as to overcome language difficulties.*

(4) A comprehensive study of copyright problems, with special relation to the proposed world copyright conference in 1947.

(5) UNESCO will collect ideas of international significance and will stimulate their use in feature films, radio programmes and Press features. It may encourage awards (made by outside organizations, not UNESCO) for successful features based on these ideas. This project will, in effect, be an **International Ideas Bureau.** There is also to be a **World Feature Story Project,** by which UNESCO will arrange for leading research men, writers, radio and film producers to co-operate in presenting a major story of world interest and importance in all the media simultaneously. Possible subjects already listed are: *The education of children in a war-stricken country (in terms of international co-operation); the 'T.V.A.' scheme for India; the Moscow Art Theatre; and, later, the proposed Amazon development scheme.*

The International Forum will be a series of discussions on international subjects by well-known figures from all over the world syndicated throughout the world in the Press and on national radio networks.

A special scheme for radio, to be called the **World University of the Air.** In this UNESCO, by consulting with national broadcasting bodies, and making the necessary arrangements (including the provision of texts and transcriptions where needed), would arrange a world-series of talks by the greatest authorities in the fields of education, science and culture.

(6) UNESCO will co-operate with UN in the proposed World Conference of Journalists, with special reference to the unification of journalistic rules and practices, and to the status of foreign correspondents.

(7) UNESCO will, of course, press for the universal acceptance and ratification (by non-member as well as member States) of the new Convention for ensuring *the free international passage of approved educational, scientific and cultural films.*

B: Stimulation

(1) UNESCO will stimulate (*a*) the supply of suitable films to deficiency countries in relation to their needs, and (*b*) a conference called to aid the reconstruction of educational broadcasting.

(2) UNESCO will concern itself with the international aspects of Press and publications generally, including particularly *organized goodwill tours by journalists, children's papers, standard classes in journalism for children and teachers, and the production of genuinely international publications.*

(3) The formation of **Institutes of Scientific Information** is envisaged in the member countries. UNESCO will in due course act as clearing house between these Institutes.

(4) Similarly, **National Visual Councils** will be promoted, whose job it will be to ensure film and film information services for educational and other commodity organizations. They will also express the needs of these organizations to producers at home and, through UNESCO, to producers overseas.

(5) In co-operation with existing International Film Bodies UNESCO will help to form an **International Film Council,** representing film interests of all kinds in all countries.

C: Direct Services

(1) In order to prevent overlapping and to ensure economy UNESCO is helping to form a **United Nations Film Board,** which will co-ordinate all the film work of the special agencies of UN (e.g. FAO, WHO, ILO, etc.).

(2) UNESCO is to be a clearing house for basic materials on UNESCO subjects for the world Press, and will provide information and materials accordingly.

(3) UNESCO will similarly be a clearing house for radio information, and will in particular collect information on programme techniques and new developments.

(4) Again, UNESCO will be a clearing house for *information about films, film-strips and other visual media, with special reference to health, food, agriculture, social and economic problems, education, science and the arts.* It will promote in all countries common methods of collecting and cataloguing information.

On this basis UNESCO will (a) provide each country with facts and information from all other countries, (b) organize (through national bodies) demonstration exhibits which will show the use being made of the visual media in education, science and the arts; and (c) will show producers what new films are required, and assist in their supply.

WHY NO LABOUR FILMS?

DOREEN WILLIS, in this hard-hitting article, challenges the Unions, the Co-ops and the documentary film makers alike

FIVE YEARS of *DNL* back numbers can produce only a few column inches of space devoted to films and the Labour Movement. The ease with which an organized audience of eight million trade unionists and nine million Co-operative families has been ignored is almost breathtaking.

From a movement priding itself on its presentation of social problems and activities more is required than observation and truthful portrayal. The 'creative interpretation of actuality' implies more than photographing sweaty faces, slum housing and the gyrations of machines. The individual worker and housewife are now a familiar sight on both theatrical and non-theatrical screens and the earnest picture-goer may well have amassed quite a wealth of information about the work men do in this modern Britain, from Grierson's herring fishers through to the scientific worker processing DDT. But what of the worker in the aggregate, in the millions-strong movements which express his special needs and aspirations? We've not seen him on the screen yet—or at any rate only in the briefest of glimpses.

Documentary has a proud record. Its films have helped to orientate people to the complex workings of industrial society while assisting them in the fight for a better deal. Its best films have been those which performed these functions consciously and in which the film makers had a real opportunity to grapple with a definite problem, such as housing, malnutrition, etc. Something of the strength and confidence of the people in action has been assimilated into these films, and it is this vitality (inspiration if you like) which the Labour Movement can offer to all the social arts, including documentary.

However, the economics of documentary film making being what they are, nothing so ephemeral as inspiration will suffice to ensure the production of films with social validity. This hard fact explains, though does not condone, much of the apparent lack of interest in Labour problems which shows through the columns of *DNL*. Have not the unions, for example, ignored documentary just as consistently? Certainly few films have been sponsored by unions, while the output of the Co-operative Movement has been ludicrously below its potentialities. Again, can it be claimed that the Labour organisations have exhibited the interest in this new educational and propaganda force that one would expect of a forward-looking movement? Unfortunately no. Financial problems have created for both users a barrier which good sense and ideological conviction have hitherto failed to surmount.

This provides documentary with one of its major problems. It might have been hoped that the advent of a Labour Government would automatically have solved it by opening out new vistas of social film making and by illustrating through its example the role which films can play in the carrying through of a vast programme of social reform. In practice the Government seems happily embarked on a modest programme of films dealing with the technical aspects of production, instruction, reconversion, etc., which, though valuable and necessary, cannot fail to be pedestrian if viewed from the standpoint of social documentary.

Can we afford, as citizens, to settle down to a life of pseudo-peaceful reconstruction? Have all the great problems and conflicts vanished with the ending of the war and the election of a new Government? One great section of the people doesn't think so anyway. Meeting recently, the Trades Union Congress expressed strong feelings on a variety of issues of acute interest to us all. They weren't altogether happy about the prospects of peace; they were alarmed at the survival of large remnants of Fascism; concerned about the use of atomic power; and fed to the teeth with being exhorted to increase production while many elementary trade union rights are still unrealized and the prospect of a world slump grows.

Hasn't documentary something to say on these questions? Of course it has, but the problems still remain of how to get films of this type sponsored and then how to show them to the people most interested and responsive. A beginning has been made in the trade union sponsorship of films, first with the Amalgamated Engineering Union film, *Unity is Strength*, and more recently with those commissioned by the Electrical Trades Union and the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers. The ETU film is particularly important because it is attempting to tackle a subject wider than its own work—the social implications of electricity. It will be good to see what the electrical workers feel about this subject and the proposals they have to make for the development of this type of power. But many other equally fascinating subjects present themselves. Recently we have seen a Crown film dealing with the railways as a career for young people, and the competent, objective handling of the material compelled our admiration. But the idea which remained in our heads long after seeing the film was horror at the low wage rates being offered to men on whose skill and judgment the lives of the travelling public depend (a living wage appeared to be paid only to those responsible for the handling of the financial side of the railway service!). What do the railmen themselves think of their calling as a career? What will they demand of a publicly owned transport system? We ought to have a film about that. And so we could go on, listing the films we should like to see but which only the Labour Movement can sponsor.

Superficially it appears that the Co-operative Movement has gone further, but comparison between its vast resources and its actual output of films presents a different picture. We have had a spate of short advertising films of indifferent quality, but few films of a fundamental character. Surely the time has come for the building up of its own documentary unit by the Co-op and for the turning out of a series of films on social subjects close to the interests and ideals of co-operation.

But sponsorship of films by the Labour Movement can come only if the individual worker is convinced of the value of the film. No union executive will agree to the considerable expense involved unless it is confident that the expenditure will be approved by the membership.

In bringing films to the unions there is much to be learnt from Canadian experience. There is nothing magic about the way in which trade union circuits were built up over there: just a good deal of thought and considerable organization. Having appreciated the importance of this audience, the first job was to sell the idea that films could help trade unionists. This was tackled with imagination and enterprise and resulted in the production of some first-class publicity material, including posters and a regular news sheet. It was understood that union film shows must not be stunts, for these would soon pall, but must become an integral part of branch activity. So films were woven into the normal fabric of union educational work, and, with the co-operation of the Canadian WEA, a technique of discussion shows was developed. Out of this experience came the production of special discussion trailers in which ordinary trade unionists gave their point of view on the main film and developed a controversy which could be continued by the live audience.

Trade union and co-operative interest in documentary can only be achieved from a study of their real needs and interests rather than from abstract appeals or aggrieved bemoanings that the Labour Movement 'doesn't appreciate films'. As a matter of fact, when the unions, for example, have been approached and told something about the films which exist and the free distribution facilities, they have shown a marked interest or even enthusiasm. This is expressed in an increasing number of articles in union journals and in the beginnings of branch film shows. In Glasgow an interesting development has been the formation of a Trades Council Film Society, which is showing mainly documentary films. At least this is a start.

The Central Office of Information has also a big opportunity to encourage not only the showing of films in the union branches, etc., but also the sponsorship by Government Departments of films having a more direct reference to the problems of Labour. The establishment of the National Film Association by the Co-operative Movement is a significant step forward, though it will need to break decisively with Workers' Film Association traditions of planlessness, inefficiency and preoccupation with profit making, if it is to realize its vast potentialities. It is also to be hoped that the International Labour Office will now implement the decision to carry out a programme of film making which was held up by the war. One must not forget, in this connection, the opportunities which face the World Federation of Trade Unions in fostering the exchange of films on national Labour achievements and the sponsorship of films dealing with common international problems.

These developments, though still in their first beginnings, mean great possibilities for the documentary movement. What is it prepared to do about them?

At the Pasteur Institute in France amazing new techniques are used to film operations on organisms so tiny that they have plenty of room to romp inside the eye of a needle. J. V. DURDEN here gives an expert's view to these new developments in

FILMS AND MICRO-BIOLOGY

IT IS a pleasure to see fresh examples of the use of the film as a tool in the hands of biological research workers. It is with the complexities of the living processes, both in the study of the plant and the animal kingdoms, that the film really comes into its own as the recording medium *par excellence*. What is even more gratifying is to see the supreme skill with which the difficult problems of ciné-micrography have been solved by Dr. Comandon and M. de Fonbrune of the Département de Cinémicrographie of the Pasteur Institute, in the films recently presented at the British Council by M. de Fonbrune.

The subject of this series of films is Microbiology, the microscopic study of some of the smallest units of living matter. The object of the research was the elucidation of certain little-understood phenomena difficult to comprehend by the more normal methods of visual observation. Seven films were shown:

(1) *Caryocinese.*
(2) *Amoeba Verrucosa.*
(3) *Phagocytose.*
(4) *Technique de Micromanipulation.*
(5) *Substitution de Noyaux D'Amibes.*
(6) *Champignons Predateurs.*
(7) *Lankesterella.*

In the first film we see time-lapse records of the phenomenon of karyokinesis, the reactions of the nucleus during the process of cell division. In living material, as opposed to fixed and stained micro-preparations, the nucleus is, in most cases, by no means easy to see.

The time-lapse technique, coupled with brilliant photo-micrography, demonstrates conclusively the extreme value of the cinema for this type of investigation and record.

This sort of thing has been done before, notably in the work of the late Dr. Canti and in some of the films photographed by the late Percy Smith; but never has the quality of the result approached these new efforts from the workers at the Pasteur Institute.

Feeding the Amoeba

The second film is an attempt to gain information on the mechanism of ingestion of food-particles by the single-celled organism amoeba. It had long been thought that the food penetrated the protoplasm of the organism by some purely physical means, such as capillary attraction. That this was not so was shown clearly many years ago in a film by Percy Smith in which amoeba was shown itself to display the most energetic activity in the matter of eating its food, the pseudopodia advancing round and trapping quite active micro-organisms. In this Pasteur film the amoebae were fed with quite large algae, many times longer than the amoebae themselves. The protoplasm of the amoeba was clearly shown to exert a considerable force on the alga, appearing to pull it from within as a pseudopodium advanced along it, and coiling the threadlike alga up like a spring within the cell; so great was the tension of this spring that, in some instances filmed, it exceeded the cohesion of the protoplasm and burst out of the amoeba on the opposite side to that on which it was ingested. This sudden eruption in no way incapacitated the amoeba, which was able immediately to go on feeding on another alga.

Blood Football

The third film in this series is a spectacular demonstration of the bacteriocidal activities of the white corpuscles in the blood. It opens with a time-lapse shot of blood showing the normal state of the leucocytes in which they wander at random amongst the red corpuscles.

Then small aggregates of bacteria are introduced into the blood; immediately the leucocytes cease their aimless wandering and converge on the interlopers like the players converging on the ball on the football field. They ingest the bacteria and then disperse once more.

The technique of darkground illumination is particularly good in this film causing the white corpuscles to stand out clearly and in brilliant contrast to the red corpuscles. It should be pointed out that to achieve such a striking picture as is presented here, the blood must be treated so that it contains a higher percentage of white corpuscles than normal.

Too Many Clocks

It is a pity that the time-lapse sequences in all these films are marred by the introduction of a clock face recording the degree of speeding-up of the observed action. This device, used many times before, has always been a source of distraction to the viewer and adds nothing to the value of the scene. While realizing that the timing of the recorded phenomena is of vital importance to the research worker, we feel that it would be preferable, and not difficult, to photograph the timing device on the portion of the film normally occupied by the sound track so that it would be masked off during projection.

The Micro Forge

The second part of this extremely interesting show was devoted to the exposition of another specialized technique used in micro-biology, namely micro-manipulation. It is possible to perform delicate operations on microscopic organisms by what is known as micro-dissection. For this work, two ingenious instruments have been devised by M. de Fonbrune, the micro-forge and the micro-manipulator; the former is for making the required tools and the latter for using them. Both these instruments were demonstrated in the next film. Unfortunately the filmic exposition was not too good, and one was left with a rather hazy impression of their mechanics and operation. However, the section dealing with the making of the extremely fine implements used in micro-dissection, which is actually done under the microscope, was very clear and gave a good idea of the potentialities of the micro-forge.

The three remaining films were of subjects which could only be tackled with the help of the micro-manipulator. First came the removal of the nucleus from the living cell of an amoeba, showing the subsequent reactions of the organism; its normal activities are inhibited and it behaves quite irregularly, being unable to move properly, feed, or reproduce. Nevertheless it remains alive for some considerable time after this drastic operation. More remarkable still is the implanting of another nucleus into a disorganized amoeba which has been deprived of its own some hours previously; incredible though it may seem, the cell recovers and the creature resumes its normal behaviour as if nothing whatever had happened to it.

A Strange Fungus

A strange soil-dwelling fungus provides the subject for the second example of micro-manipulation. This organism, given the right conditions, develops peculiar rings on its hyphae with which it can snare minute but active nematode worms. There are not many plants which are carnivorous, and they are all amongst the higher plants; nevertheless this microscopic and lowly fungus manages to equal their skill in trapping active prey.

It is shown in the film how irritation of the inner surfaces of the three cells of which the hyphal rings are composed, causes immediate expansion inwards of the cells thereby restricting the central aperture of the ring. This irritation is produced artificially by rubbing with a micro-needle.

When the same irritation is caused naturally by the nematode entering the ring, the worm is caught by the sudden constriction of the aperture and is eventually digested.

This phenomenon, which one might wait years to observe naturally, was brought about for the purposes of the film by holding the worm in a micro-pipette and inserting the creature into the deadly noose.

The last film shows the puncturing of the corpuscles of the blood of a frog which were parasitized by the organism lankesterella. The liberation of the parasite is seen, and the ease with which it penetrates the tough envelopes of other corpuscles.

Dr. Comandon and M. de Fonbrune are to be congratulated on their efforts, and it is to be hoped that we shall see more work of the calibre of these films in the future.

BRITISH MEDICAL FILMS

A study of the evolution of the medical film in this country

by Brian Stanford, M.R.C.S., D.M.R., F.R.P.S.

CINEMA and roentgenology both became a practicable proposition at about the same time, and both were applied to medicine early in their evolution; in 1895 roentgenology was discovered and immediately applied in medicine, and in 1897 Schuster recorded the movements of some of his patients while walking in an attempt to analyse their defects. (It is interesting to remember that Muybridge in 1872 made the first attempt at cinematography in order to analyse the leg movements of the galloping horse.)

Yet cinematography in medicine did not catch on, for it was of no such value in diagnosis as was roentgenology, and it was not until the early 1920's when the cinema had become a universally accepted ancillary of modern civilisation that medicine again looked at this medium and tried to use it for itself. This renewal of interest was facilitated by the popularization of the substandard gauge film (9.5 mm. was introduced in 1912, and 16 mm. in 1923) which allowed the camera to be made sufficiently small to be handled by one man, and the cost of film to come down to the range of one man's pocket. Films had been made before this by individual surgeons, but projectors were expensive and so the films were rarely used. Another equally important cause of the re-awakening interest was the increasing use of non-inflammable film (introduced in 1909) which enabled the private individual to give film shows in his home or school without taking the extensive precautions needed for projecting ordinary nitrate film.

Two Groups

Broadly speaking, two groups of practitioner became enthusiastic supporters of this new medium; the surgeon who wished to demonstrate repeatedly and at ease techniques which he performed only rarely, and the teacher of physiology who preferred the certainty of a film demonstration of an experiment to the vagaries of his biologic material for a demonstration—the subsidiary consideration that a film demonstration saves an animal for another experiment was probably not so important as it might seem.

Now these two classes, who make films for much the same basic reason, do so in different circumstances; for the physiologist can take surgical risks, can neglect the finer shades of aseptic technique, can repeat the experiment until an adequate record is made, and can personally supervise the cameraman. Not so the surgeon; he must place the safety of his patient before everything else, and he must give his undivided attention to the operation, leaving it to somebody else to make the film. And so we have today a number of amateur films which show physiological experiments crudely (in terms of photography) but satisfactorily in terms of teaching; while the corresponding amateur surgical films are in the majority of cases worthless for teaching purposes simply because the cameraman did not know what he was recording—what was significant and what he could leave out.

Physiologists, we have seen, bought their cameras and their film, made their records, and were content. Surgeons bought their camera and their film, were unable to make the record themselves, were discontented with the results other men made for them with their apparatus, and so turned to Messrs. Kodak, who had supplied their equipment, for help. In 1929 the Kodak Medical Film Unit was established to make photographic records for surgeons. This pioneer unit, under the direction of Mr. W. Buckstone, did valuable work and made a large number of films. But it suffered from the lack of a medical man on the staff; the records were all made by photographers who learnt medicine as they went along, who were ignorant of what they wanted to photograph, but who were assumed by the surgeon to know their job. Effective liaison between surgeon and cameraman was rare, and the records they made are mostly poor quality; the area of interest in the picture is usually too small to show adequate detail, for the cameramen, feeling ill at ease in an operating theatre, preferred to hold their cameras in their hands than to place them rigidly on a tripod, and were therefore precluded from using long-focus lenses; for the same reason the pictures are often out of focus, and continuity further destroyed by the film being made from a number of different angles, selected at random. Nevertheless, with purchases from other countries, the Kodak Medical Film Library grew until it is now the largest specialized medical collection in the country, and by the early 1930's substandard cinematography was sufficiently widespread for several drug houses to found small libraries of films which they loaned out to medical meetings, often supplying a lecturer as well.

Catalogues

In 1933 the League of Nations Health Organization, at the suggestion of the International Institute of Educational Cinematography (formed at the suggestion of the Italian Government in 1928) decided to prepare an international catalogue of films. Great Britain, a participant member of the International Institute, went ahead with this work, and in 1936 the British Film Institute published its first catalogue of medical films, with a supplement issued in 1938. Unfortunately, the rise of Fascism prevented the full programme of the International Institute from maturing, but this B.F.I. catalogue remained until very recently the only available catalogue listing films held by individuals or small groups in Britain (it is now out of print).

The Royal Society of Medicine, which had installed a 35 mm. projector as long ago as 1912, acquired substandard projectors in 1930; and by now it was becoming fashionable to illustrate an address to a medical audience with films. Looked at today they appear to have been made, one cannot help thinking, to show surgical skill almost as often as to demonstrate techniques; for instance, there now exist at least fourteen films illustrating the operation for Caesarean section, not one of which shows sufficient detail for training a student. It is a spectacular operation with an obvious return for one's work; and was probably chosen in many instances as a trial by a surgeon to see what cinema could do, but the results are certainly discouraging. Yet this experimentation was not without value; lunch-table talk must have roused the interest of the physician, for neurologists were quick to see the value of this medium for teaching their students.

Getting Going

The films they made are often crude, but better than the surgeons, for once again they have time, can supervise the cameraman, and can take a repeat shot if the first is unsatisfactory. A number of useful films were made in this way, both at Edinburgh and Sheffield between 1930 and 1938. And now we are in the immediate pre-war years; colour film is becoming reliable, and students interested in photography are beginning to take active interest in producing films for teaching themselves and their colleagues. Experimental units at Ashford and Manchester, financed for the most part by a surgeon, staffed and equipped by the students themselves, are producing better films. They know what they are recording; theatre ritual and technique holds no terror for them; they have discussed in detail just what they want to show, and coached the surgeon to make sure he shows it; and just as they are all set to produce valuable films, it is already 1939.

The War Years

Now the whole picture alters. Film stock for amateurs is scarce, time scarcer, facilities nil; the amateur, just feeling his strength, is eclipsed, qualifies hurriedly, and is called-up. But in wartime, the health of the nation is important; "health" films—dealing with vitamins, crèches, canteen problems, first-aid—are wanted to inform the public quickly and in an attractive manner of the facilities that are available to them. Professional film units are called in to make these films, and they find the subject interesting, make good films. Almost overnight it becomes obvious that many if not most of the films previously made for medical training are obsolete. The British Council in 1943 finances at great expense two excellent films on medicine, carefully made by film experts collaborating closely with doctors. But the purpose of these films is not clear; beautifully made, they have little use, and the British Council instead of profiting by the experience and going ahead, makes little progress in this field. But I.C.I. sees the value of good film technique coupled to good medicine, and in 1944 sponsors a series of eleven films on anaesthetic techniques, designed for medical students and nobody else; and now the page is finally turned: there can be no going back: medical films will in future be judged by the standard of these Realist Film Unit productions, until an even better series is made. The film profession has invaded medicine, and medicine has invaded film, and that is where we are today.

What will follow? Films of this type are expensive; very expensive by the old standards. A thirty-minute talkie will cost £5,000 at the very least. No individual can afford that, and no group exists to administer joint funds. Some co-ordinating scheme must be produced on a nation-wide basis.

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FILMS IN MALAYA—

ALONGSIDE OTHER Governments the newly formed Malayan Union has set up its own Film Production Unit under the control of the Department of Public Relations. The event is an important one in documentary film history, particularly because of the wide geographical and racial coverage which the unit can achieve.

The Malayan population is admittedly a mere eight million, but it is divided into three main racial groups: Malay, Indian and Chinese. Other races are represented, including European, and the population is therefore widely representative of the whole of South-East Asia. It is not too much to conclude that films appealing to any particular race in Malaya will also appeal to the country of origin, e.g. China, India, Indonesia, and if they appeal to all three main divisions then they will be assured a showing throughout South-East Asia. In fact, although the Malayan Film Production Unit may be known as such, it will really have the status of the South-East Asian Unit, and potentially it is capable of exercising a wide influence.

A short time ago Information Films of India led the field in the area and their production output was very considerable. Unfortunately the Indian Government has not been able to see its way to continue film-making and so IFI has to all intents and purposes closed shop. It is more than probable that the unit will be set up again when the mistake has been fully realised, but for the time being MFPU is left as the only unit capable of serving South-East Asia.

Even with IFI in full production its output did not satisfy the demand and by far the greater bulk of films shown in the area were made through European motive. Although the commentaries were adapted to the various languages, the Asiatic still lost a certain amount in that he had perforce to look at foreigners on the screen. Although the films certainly got a showing and were appreciated, the occasional film made from the Asiatic point of view and dealing with Asiatics got an appreciation one thousand per cent greater, even if it was technically not so good.

Added to this, of course, there are a vast number of subjects that have never been and can never be dealt with by European units, either because the European cannot appreciate the Oriental outlook and make full use of film as a medium or because there are not units enough to cover the subjects waiting.

The Malayan Film Unit should answer both these problems in part. The formation of the unit opens up a new vista of film material and the fact that the staff will be chiefly Asiatic means that films will be made from their point of view. A small number of British film technicians have been taken in to ensure that the Asiatic staff gets the best possible grounding in documentary film production, but it is hoped that in the course of a few years they will take over and run their own unit.

In Malaya, the idea of a documentary film unit is a new one and it is difficult to find trained personnel because very few films of any description have been made here before the war. The output of finished films for the first year will be small, but as the technical skill of the staff improves, teething troubles are overcome and the idea is proved, the volume of production will increase accordingly. A nucleus of equipment has been purchased from the American Army Film and Photo Section, and may be classed among the finest. In time, the unit will be entirely self-contained with its own processing plant, recording channels, stage and animation studio.

Most films will be made in Malay, Chinese, Tamil and English, and additional language versions will be recorded for other countries in the area so that showing will not be reserved for Malaya alone. Films will be also made to cater for individual races in Malaya but usually they should have a general appeal. It is important that the idea of the three races living in harmony together should be preserved and fostered.

The unit will be run as a public service and its aim will be to improve the standards of living and education in the area. Literacy in Malaya stands at 40 per cent and it is lower still in adjoining countries. The circulation of printed matter is restricted to a fraction of the population; radio is hampered by the scarcity of receiving sets. It will therefore largely be through film that knowledge and information will reach the people.

Side by side with the formation of the film production unit in Malaya, the development of non-theatrical showing is going ahead even faster. Shortly there should be a number of sixteen and thirty-five millimetre projectors on the road daily, giving shows all over the Union. It is hoped that they will achieve a yearly audience figure to compare favourably with those obtaining in the United Kingdom; and there is reason to suppose that they may even prove more successful, because they are not hampered by the size of a village hall or by rival attractions in the same way that we are in Europe. Showings will be made chiefly in the *kampongs* (villages) and out of doors where the size of the audience is only limited by the output of the speakers and the size of the screen. If the non-theatrical development in neighbouring countries keeps pace with Malaya's, the field open to the Malayan Film Production Unit will be very considerable.

No mention has yet been made of theatrical showing and here we can expect a very large addition to the yearly audience figure. Although there is no intention to rival commercial interests in film production and films will never be made for direct monetary profit, there will be a definite programme of films made with a view to getting theatrical distribution. Every co-operation from the distributors can be expected. In this way the townsman will see the unit's productions in the public theatres as well as in the schools, the lecture halls and the market place, while the country folk will be served with non-theatrical showings.

Besides making films specially for distribution in South-East Asia, productions will be put in hand for distribution in countries outside the area. It is time that the people of the East were better understood by the rest of the world, and the idea—so tenaciously held by the Western mind—that the Far East is a savage place full of Dorothy Lamours in sarongs, venomous snakes draped over every branch and jungles made of red-spotted fungus and aspidistras, be finally and for ever shattered. The Malayan Film Unit's function will largely be to help the population of South-East Asia to fit more securely into the pattern of modern world economy and to bring about a better understanding between East and West. In Malaya it has been proved over the last century that four races can live in harmony together. Here is a perfect background for a documentary film unit.

—AND IN EGYPT

AS IS well known, the marvels of modern civilization make it possible to take a tram from Cairo to the Pyramids of Giza. The same tram will take you to Egypt's Denham, where almost in the shadow of the Great Pyramid stand the stages and laboratories of the MISR studios—the largest and best-equipped in Egypt. (MISR, by the way, is the banking and financial organization which has an interest in most aspects of the country's trade and general economy, including the very efficient airlines.) At the MISR studios you will find one large stage, one small, a fully equipped sound department with a recording theatre and a dubbing theatre, and all the usual appurtenances of film-making. Owing to the war, it has been difficult to renew and repair much of the essential apparatus, and a lot of ingenuity on the part of the staff has been necessary. But today a certain amount of new apparatus is being installed or due for delivery.

These studios are rented out as well as operating on their own account. At present renting is in the ascendant, and is a reflection of the astonishing boom in Egyptian films which is now at its climax. It is computed that there are over 140 film production companies in Egypt at the moment, and even allowing for the fact that many of these are one-picture concerns, the output per year is colossal. Someone in Cairo said that at the moment some 150 feature-length films are awaiting release.

As far as one can make out, average production time for a feature is four to six weeks. The bulk of the costs seem to go to the stars, who receive anything from £5,000 to £12,000 for a month's work, according to their popularity. (There is virtually no income tax.)

In fact, there are all the symptoms of an impending slump.

Background to all this are some salient facts which count. The Egyptian industry is only about fifteen years old. Its rapid growth has taken place largely because no other producing country was (or is) making Arabic dialogue talkies for the audiences of the Near and Middle East. The Arabic speaking peoples are, in general, ardent and certainly indefatigable movie-goers, and the market is much larger than you might expect. A further and more recent factor has been the passing of a law by the Egyptian Government not unlike our own quota law. This encouragement for home-made films has led to the multiplicity of production companies and the over-production already mentioned.

Broadly speaking, there are two main types of Egyptian features. First, the—presumably inevitable—attempts to make social dramas and/or comedies in imitation of the Western type of feuilleton story. Second, action pictures based either on Arabian legend or on contemporary life. In these the Western is largely the model used.

Quality, with certain exceptions, is by no means high. Even a brief acquaintance with

(*continued on page* 77)

RADIO AND THEATRE

Documentary is not the copyright of the film people. The method is in fact appropriate to any medium which reaches many people simultaneously. On these pages, two well-known figures in broadcasting and drama examine documentary ideas as they affect their own work. We begin with Laurence Gilliam:-

DOCUMENTARY RADIO

by LAURENCE GILLIAM
Feature Programme Director of the British Broadcasting Corporation

THE CAREER of the documentary radio or 'feature' programme in British broadcasting offers many parallels to the course of the documentary film. Both had their roots in the realist movement that followed the first world war and attracted so many active and curious minds to explore the mysteries and excitements of a new medium of expression. Both drew inspiration and strength from the 'social awareness' that permeated the thinking and feeling of so many young artists, thinkers, leaders and talkers of the twenties and thirties who passed out of the middle-class schools and universities, or pushed their way from uncongenial desk jobs or pedagogic backwaters to the more exciting forms of expression offered by the microphone and the cutting bench. Documentary radio, as well as documentary film, recruited its writers and directors from this new, impulsive and purposeful class of young people with ideas. Both forms have drawn with profit on the talents thrown generously and enthusiastically into their service. Writers, both poets and journalists, composers and painters, architects and actors have all found scope for experiment and the satisfaction of fulfilment in both these fields.

There have, in the past fifteen years, been examples of intermingling of talents between documentary film and radio. But in the main the two groups have followed parallel lines without meeting. This, I think, has been mainly due to the exigencies of the job, and, more recently, to the inhuman pressures of the war, rather than to any deep-rooted differences. I don't know how many documentary film people listen seriously to radio features. I do know that radio producers are, as a body, avid film-goers. I remember, some years ago, with the aid of Basil Wright, trying to arrange a regular get-together of film and radio documentary people, but it soon fizzled out. More concrete evidence of radio interest in documentary films has been the various instances of outstanding documentaries adapted for broadcasting. There was *Western Approaches* and Humphrey Jennings' Welsh village reconstruction of Lidice, and several others. Soon a radio version of Jill Craigie's *The Way We Live* will be presented in the Home Service. Films as a whole are being treated in 'Picture Parade', the film magazine in the Light Programme, and documentary matters get their share of attention. But on the whole, I suspect the people of these two worlds know little about each other's work.

The history of the 'feature' programme, which is what radio producers in documentary call their product, falls easily and inevitably into three parts. Part one—'Early Struggles'; part two—'War'; part three—'Back to Peace'. These divisions may suggest a parallel to documentary films. I wouldn't know. The story of the early days was one of struggle for recognition; for incessant hammering at a pleasure-crazed world that the drama of fact was more exciting than the gilded butterflies of the drama of make believe. With rare exceptions, the pleasure-crazed world was not convinced. The exceptions were interesting, because they pointed the way to future successes. There was *Job to be Done*, a dramatized exposition of American boom and slump which opened many eyes and ears; that was an American production by Pare Lorentz and Bill Robson for the Columbia Workshop. There was *Twenty Years Ago*, a radio report on the cause of the first world war. There were experiments by Olive Stapley and Francis Dillon and others in the field of actuality, showing the new possibilities of sound and speech recorded in its own setting and its own rhythm. And, as a matter of history, there were the special hook-up programmes for Christmas, the Coronation and the Jubilee, which really did convince the widest audience of the interest and entertainment possibilities of actuality. But, on the whole, features before the war were tentative and experimental, a true workshop for determined believers in the art of radio.

With the war, as with documentary films, the situation changed dramatically. Now fact was indisputably more exciting than fiction. The experimentalists of 1939 became the 'priority one' propagandists of 1940. The recording car which had browsed happily in the hop-fields of Kent was now smothered with dirty brown paint and sent to browse among the sickening ruins of the Old Kent Road. Earlier, the documentary method was used to dramatize and personalize the enemy in the series *Shadow of the Swastika*, which immediately captured an audience of millions. The Christmas Day 'hook-ups' continued, but the radio magic that had linked homely families all over the Empire was now used to demonstrate to a dubious world that Britain was still able to celebrate Christmas, even 'under fire'. I don't think I shall ever forget the flat Lancastrian voice of Geoffrey Bridson over the line from Manchester saying that I 'couldn't have the Merchant Navy Club because there are four land mines round it'. So it went on. Cecil McGivern made an outstanding name for himself among wartime radio writers for his telling of the R.A.F. story, and later the Mulberry story, and later the Radar story. Robert Barr, John Glyn-Jones, and Gordon Boshell brought a new combination of journalistic attack and theatrical flair to the topical war magazine feature 'Marching On'. Month by month, year by year, the documentary feature grew in importance. Writers new to radio like Louis MacNeice, learnt a new technique in the service of war documentary. Promising newcomers like Jennifer Wayne and Nesta Pain served their apprenticeship in these years. Prewar experimentalists like Stephen Potter and Geoffrey Bridson revealed unsuspected versatility under war conditions. It was a tumultuous, exacting and exciting time, and it has left its mark, for good and ill, on the post-war practice of documentary radio.

There was one wartime programme 'War Report' which outstripped all theories of documentary, and by matching many broadcasting techniques to the speed and pressure of events produced something which blazed with topicality. From D-Day onwards, by means of a combined operation between commentator, feature producers, and news men, British radio gave a daily sound picture of the war, unique in reporting history. Reporters and engineers risked their lives every day to get their microphones to the scene of action. The fighting services cooperated magnificently with transport, communications and fast censorship facilities. The last link was the intricate editing organization which put 'War Report' on the air every night, red-hot from the front line. This job could not have been done without the experience painfully gathered by the experimental pioneers. It set a standard which peacetime broadcasting will find difficult to match.

Radio documentary faces the peace with a record of solid apprenticeship and honourable war service. Its practitioners have passed the stage of experimental measles. They no longer stop the recording car to enshrine the golden untouched speech of every fisherman and shepherd they meet. Indeed, they drive faster, for the danger today is that the radio-wise rustic will now stop them and demand to be put immediately 'In Town Tonight' or 'Country Magazine'! The peacetime set-up of the B.B.C. offers documentary producers a practically unrestricted field for their craft. The Regional stations, after a period of enforced rationing, are bursting into new life. Such programmes as 'The Naturalist' and 'All are Welcome' from the West, 'Town Meeting' and 'Have a Go' from the North, are evidence that the documentary spirit is no London prerogative. The London producers are ex-

ploring new fields too. With the end of the war, B.B.C. feature men have been ranging across Europe with recording cars to bring back authentic sound pictures from France and Sweden, Italy and Yugoslavia, Belgium, Holland and Denmark, for the series 'Window on Europe' in the Home Service. In the Light Programme a new popular audience has been found for documentary, provided the subjects dealt with are of general interest and the presentation popular. A new series, 'Focus', is attempting to put the spotlight on such subjects as 'Drink', 'Gambling', 'Coal', 'Housing'. The aim is purely objective; to present facts, opinions, and trends in such an easily understandable and entertaining way that no literate adult could fail to catch the drift. A similar job was done on the post-war crime wave by the two series 'It's Your Money They're After' and 'There's no Future in It'. Then there is the Third Programme, only two months old as I write, and already the feature programme as practised by Louis MacNeice, Rayner Heppenstall, Douglas Cleverdon, Stephen Potter, and Nesta Pain, has proved equal to the rarefied atmosphere. True, features in the Third Programme tend to be mainly literary in character but a pointer in the opposite direction was provided by the outstanding success of *Hiroshima*, John Hersey's 'New Yorker' narrative, which scored a new high in appreciative reaction from the listener research poll, Incidentally, the two greatest post-war successes in documentary radio have both been war stories; *Hiroshima* and *The Man from Belsen*, Leonard Cottrell's reconstruction of the experiences in a concentration camp of the Jersey schoolmaster, Harold le Druillenec. It is my own belief that the current reaction against stories of the war both in radio and films has been accepted far too uncritically. I believe that the war has been such an overwhelming experience in the lives of our generation, that its distillation into all forms of art, radio and films included, has not seriously begun. What we have seen and heard so far have been but sketches, hurried dispatches from the threatened outposts of present experience. Therefore, I believe that the apparent confusion and frustration among writers and producers whose war has been taken away is a transient phase. There is no easy way 'back to peace' and there is no quick and easy path 'away from war'. Documentary producers in all fields would clear their own minds if they avoided the catch phrases of the box-office prophets of 1946 as pointedly as they ignored the wishful headlines of 1939. There is only one way ahead for documentary. The slow, steady, mapping of the jungle of ignorance and prejudice.

DOCUMENTARY THEATRE

by MONTAGU SLATER
Playwright, Librettist and Novelist

RECENTLY Michel Saint-Denis was telling me how André Obey wrote *Le Viol de Lucrèce*. The writer—he is now the chief of the Comédie Française—had joined Saint-Denis and his company somewhere in provincial France where they were playing in small halls and barns and getting a more direct contact with the audience than a conventional theatre could then attain. Obey visited them at some performance—it must have been in the late 'twenties—and because he felt this way of working with the audience was important he threw in his lot with the *Compagnie des Quinze*, and wrote for them *Noé*, *Lucrèce* and *La Bataille du Marne*.

Lucrèce (1930) is one of the formative plays of our time. It used cinematic notions. Anyone who saw Aman Maistre in the miming sequence of Tarquin's walk through the corridors at midnight is not likely to forget it in a hurry. But its main innovation was the introduction of narrative and comment in the persons of the chorus, a man and a woman, Le Récitant and La Récitante, who are not only the interpreters between the audience and the play but become in the end the chief characters.

The notion came I think more from the company than from the author. For a long time Obey found himself unable to write these parts. 'I can feel these people but I cannot hear their words,' he said. One day with Saint-Denis he listened to the radio description by two narrators of the Davis Cup final. 'Now I know how to do it,' he said, and wrote the play.

What has this to do with documentary? A full account would take more space than I have, but two aspects stand out: the sense that it was urgent to revivify the relation of audience and artist, and the appearance of new techniques—radio and sound film—come at the same time and spring from the same soil. Both affect the stage. The result is not only a new conception of realism but the return of poetry to the stage, the radio and the film.

Five years later—it is impossible to keep autobiography out of these things—the Compagnie des Quinze reached England and consciously under the influence of *Lucrèce* I wrote what I called 'a documentary play' *Easter* 1916. This was the time of *Coalface* and *Night Mail*. The word documentary was becoming known but I at any rate was using it in a narrow sense. I meant that although the play was in verse as well as prose and tried to use all the resources of the theatre it was based in the literal sense on the documents, just as *Lucrèce* had been.

Meanwhile in the United States the writers in the Federal Theatre Project had invented the 'Living Newspaper'. *Power* and *One Third of a Nation* convinced the most cynical dramatic critics that a new force was coming into the theatre. English documentarians were quick to notice that the 'Living Newspaper' technique had much to offer to the screen as well as to the stage. Paul Rotha and Miles Malleson (whose *Six Men of Dorset*, sent on tour by the TUC in 1936, was a pioneering play seeking a new audience if not a new technique) studied attentively the scripts as well as the performances of the Federal Theatre 'Living Newspapers.' In London, Unity Theatre put on *Busmen* (1937) about the London bus strike, a 'Living Newspaper' which was too preoccupied with the particular instance to state a general case: and next year, during the Munich crisis, Unity authors wrote a 'Living Newspaper' overnight on *Czechoslovakia*.

The firstfruits of Paul Rotha's studies in the technique were seen during the war in *World of Plenty:* later in *Land of Promise*, with Miles Malleson's collaboration, he went even nearer the stage form.

Towards the end of the war W. E. Williams, of ABCA, anxious to use every method of interesting the soldiers in current affairs, persuaded Michael MacOwan to produce an ABCA play unit for the presentation of 'Living Newspapers'. Several plays were put on with success, the outstanding pair being *The Great Swap* (a too optimistic account of Lend Lease) by Ted Willis and Jack Lindsay, and *Where do we go from here?* (on full employment and planning) by the same two writers plus Bridget Boland. After the war Jack Lindsay and Bert Coombes wrote *The Face of Coal* (produced at the Scala in that year by Theatre '46) about the nationalization of coal and its problems. It is worth noting that the ABCA unit dropped the title 'Living Newspaper', finding it was misleading, and called their productions 'Documentary Plays'.

In film, the word documentary extends from films set to poems like *Our Country*, *These are the Men*, *Green Mountain Black Mountain* (all Dylan Thomas), through films that are part poetry like *Night Mail* (in which Auden was the poet) and *Song of Ceylon*, through films which are the screen variants of 'Living Newspaper' like *World of Plenty* and *Land of Promise*, and through all sorts of other variants to the straight instructional like *The Care and Maintenance of the Tractor*. The vague phrase I have just used, 'all sorts of other variants' covers in fact the great body of documentary and some of its major achievements. *Le propre de ce qui est vraiment générale est d'etre fécond.*

The interaction of stage and screen is a large subject and one to be treated generally. I began with Saint-Denis and Obey and I believe the recall of poetry to stage and screen is one of the grand achievements of what we call documentary. I could make a case for a paradox that would replace the classic phrase, 'the poetry is in the passion' with 'the poetry is in the document': but this is only because the passion and the poetry are both exposed in the freshly discovered detail, the apparently small but significant fact or image which, as any interpreter of dreams will say, is cardinal. This again arises because documentary rediscovers a living relation with the audience, whether the simple relation like 'You tractor drivers will be interested in this because it tells how to maintain your tractor'; 'You mothers will be interested in this because it tells how to care for your children's eyes', or the more complex relations established by films like *Diary for Timothy* and *The Bridge*. Here is something manifestly more important than the technical corollaries like attempts on the stage to break out of the picture frame as in Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* and *The Skin of Our Teeth*. In these too the audience-relation is the important thing. The stage devices, clever as they are, are more or less successful means to an end. The end is, I think, to bring back poetry and passion by a deeper, more intimate sense of reality; and not only this intensity but a more extensive sense of reality: a wider world on the stage. Hence the use of narrative (Shakespeare emphasized its importance in the chorus passages of *Henry V*) hence the use of documentation, of poetry, and the emphasis on music. And in

(*continued on page* 80)

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Pool of Contentment. Public Relations Films for C.O.I. *Director:* Richard Massingham. *Photography:* Shaw Wildman. *Distribution*: C.F.L. to Government Departments only. 20 mins.

The Treasury, that ominous body which so often arouses fury in the breasts of documentary film makers working on Government contracts, is to be congratulated on presenting a witty film on an apparently dull subject. To let Massingham loose in a typing pool was a temptation that might have been resisted. Fortunately, it was not, and the result is a film that provides much good fun in its description of how and how not to utilize the services of a centralized pool of shorthand writers and typists.

The 'How Not' sequences inevitably make better material than the 'How', but the awful examples of people mumbling, stumbling, muttering, smoking, chewing, peering in desks and paying attention to everything and everybody but the wretched typists who are trying to get it all down, will at least provoke a cheer from the girls and possibly shake the dignities of a few executives who regard themselves as perfect dictators—of letters.

Or will it? Nobody ever sees himself in a film unless the image is favourable, so perhaps not. But the film was worth making if only to heighten the morale of the unsung workers of the pencil and typewriter who would be excused battery and assault, and much worse, if they ever took it into their heads to revolt. Photography, casting and general production values, all contribute to a useful and entertaining film for internal use in Government offices.

The Single Point Fuel Injection Pump. Shell Film Unit in collaboration with B.O.A.C. and Rolls-Royce. (Aircraft Engineering Series.) *Director*: John Shearman. *Photography*: Stanley Rodwell. *Animation*: Francis Rodker, A. J. Shaw. *Technical Adviser*: Ivor Lusty. *Production Consultants*: Film Centre. *Distribution*: Non-T. Shell Publicity Dept. 22 mins.

There have not been many films like this one. Expositional techniques apparently attract very few technicians. When films of this kind are required, all too often producers give them to the junior directors to cut their teeth on, or more experienced personnel bash them out without proper thought. Deplorably few directors are really at home with animation, and patience—even in cameramen—is a rare virtue.

One would like to believe that this particular example of the type might come as a shock to many people—a salutary shock of realization that a subject as involved as this can be put across so succinctly. But one feels, depressing though it may be, that in too many quarters—apart from those for which it is intended—it will be greeted with indifference.

The film is designed to explain the working of the modern fuel injector required for high-performance power units in aircraft. John Shearman has done this by relating the formulae of pure physics to the practical interpretation of them achieved by the engineer. In other words, his film translates a set of letters and symbols visually into swash plates and aneroid capsules, pistons and levers. Every second increases one's anxiety that the thread of the exposition is about to break, or that one will have to cry 'Pax'!—but, miraculously, it never happens.

Shearman, Rodker and Shaw have used the animation bench to give the film originality of expression and Stanley Rodwell continues in the tradition he initiated for the Admiralty Asdic Care and Maintenance series and contributes the beauty of mechanism in close-up to a film which concentrates your attention for nearly twenty minutes on a piece of equipment not much bigger than a carburretor. There is, by the way, also in the film a working model of the injector which is a masterpiece of crudity. Undeniably it does its job effectively, but it is horribly out of key with the high technical quality of the rest of the production.

The expositional film relies on a precisely controlled visual logic. It is difficult to write (so tempting at the scenario stage to rush delightedly into a welter of technical jargon) and exacting to make, for technical carelessness shows up more clearly than in any other kind. By these standards John Shearman is a welcome addition to the 'back-room boys' of documentary.

The Bridge. Data Films for C.O.I. *Producer:* Donald Alexander. *Director:* Jack Dean Chambers. *Photography:* Wolfgang Suschitsky. *Story:* Arthur Calder Marshall. *Distribution*: C.F.L. Non-T. 39 mins.

Far too few films have been produced about the problems of reconstruction in Europe. Those that have reached the screen have done so after many difficulties; usually they have been made from dupes from scenes shot by outside crews in a hurry and for no obvious reason. These have had to be adapted to a policy laid down by the 'Ministry' and shaped in the cutting rooms.

The Bridge, a four-reeler recently finished by Data, is one of the rare exceptions to this unstimulating process. A unit was sent specially to Yugoslavia to shoot an inspiring little story, of how in a remote village, devastated by war, men and women have worked together to build themselves a necessary bridge, not for motives of individual profit, but for the common good. On this location each sequence was well directed and photographed.

The completed film is not likely to be shown publicly in the cinemas. This is a sorry reflection on our industry when we remember the short films now receiving wide distribution which are bringing disrepute to the word 'documentary'. Yet the very proper complaints on this score have attracted a weight of attention to *The Bridge* which it would not otherwise have achieved, for it is in the reviewer's opinion an extremely disappointing film.

However good an original idea is, and however well each scene is played, a story must be well told. This film is too long, taking thirty-nine minutes when a quarter of an hour would not only have been ample, but far more effective. Instead of being clear and occasionally exhilarating, it is diffuse and occasionally boring. These faults are due mainly to bad construction. There are no climaxes, only a series of anti-climaxes. Time after time we reach the end of a sequence, the film makes its point, fades out to start again, making the same point at the same tempo. Unfortunately, though it is well recorded, *The Bridge* is not helped by its sound tracks—effects, music or commentary. Odd noises appearing at infrequent intervals add nothing to realism but a great deal to irritation, and on one occasion at least to unconscious humour. The music, if listened to with eyes closed, is probably fine, yet, alas, is divorced completely from anything seen on the screen. The commentary sounds as if it reads well, but as spoken is merely repetitive and tiresome. This is not because Valentine Dyall speaks it badly—just that there is no warmth in the written words. As we listen to him repeat again and again: 'The bridge must be built. The bridge will be built', we can only wish it would be so—and quickly, too. Obviously the job must have taken a long time—so long that the unit seem to have been called back before it was finished.

If only the film had achieved a sense of humanity, all its other faults could have been overlooked so easily. There is no black sheep in the village—everyone behaves too perfectly. Admittedly the film throughout follows a group of people and never a single person for long, but the same could be said about *The True Glory*, or *Desert Victory*. Surely war documentaries need not have a monopoly of feeling. With this lack of humanity there seems also a certain lack of faith. Probably in an unsuccessful attempt to obtain a commercial release, the political part of the film is played down. It certainly does not try to be impartial—only one case is put forward, but so half-heartedly that the story's strongest point—its simplicity—is almost lost.

It is sad to give such a poor report on this film. The unit rightly must have gone with such hopes to Yugoslavia and had even higher hopes when they saw their rushes. Purely factual and training films undoubtedly perform a service for the community, but it is the occasional film with an idea, such as *The Bridge*, that film makers want to welcome—all the more so, if the idea is disturbing. New films on the world's urgent social, economic and political troubles can be of immeasurable value, but only if they are made imaginatively and made well.

Good Neighbours. *Production*: Greenpark for C.O.I. *Producer*: Ralph Keene. *Director*: Humphrey Swingler. *Photography*: Ray Elton. *Music*: Patrick Harvey. *Distribution*: C.F.L. and theatrical. 15 mins.

The war-time community feeling that grew up around the air-raid shelter and the civil defence post, the gun-site and the aerodrome, is not easy to translate into a peacetime setting. Our planners have talked rather cold-bloodedly about redesigning the pattern of urban life on the basis of the neighbourhood unit. But it has needed someone to show us where the human beings come in and to put some real life into the plans for new communities.

This film, describing how the initiative of one or two people in a small Scottish town resulted in the establishment of a community centre, goes some way to fill this deficiency. Its description of the mechanics of how one organizes a campaign to get the interest of one's neighbours is admirable. We see schoolchildren pushing leaflets under doors, fêtes to bring in the cash, assistance from the Director of Education, and so on. At this practical level it will undoubtedly be of considerable value and it is encouraging to know that there is to be a shorter version as one of the monthly releases to the theatres. One can only regret that the film is not as moving as it might

have been and that too little of the vitality of a strong sense of community finds its way on to the screen. Perhaps this is because the director tried a little too hard to capture the emotional content of the struggle for the Centre and found himself instead with a slight feeling of melodrama. But these are small criticisms beside the essential value of the film and the important role it will be able to play in the work of extending community enterprise.

North-East Corner. *Production*: Greenpark for C.O.I. *Producer*: Ralph Keene in association with Film Centre. *Director*: John Eldridge. *Photography*: Martin Curtis. *Music*: Kenneth Pakeman. *Distribution*: C.F.L. 22 mins.

Seeing a film by Greenpark is rather like sitting in a bath slightly too hot; one gets lulled into a state of happy relaxation in which only the senses count. *North-East Corner* (in the Pattern of Britain series) is very much in this tradition. Its beauty is irresistible, and rests upon a subtle blending of visuals and commentary. Some of the shots are memorable in their exploitation of the photogenic qualities of Scottish landscape and coastline. It is a pity, though, that the sound is not up to the standard of the camera work.

However, the main limitation of the film is that it lacks people. The central character, an old fisherman, exists as a character only through the commentary. Visually he is an unexplored person. Throughout, it is natural or inanimate things which hold the attention, and one's intellect is untouched by the urgent posing of social problems. Of course, *North-East Corner* does deal with the farming, woollen, and distilling industries of the area, but the approach is so lyrical that it is difficult to come away with anything more than a vague impression about these enterprises. Other aspects of the social organization of north-east Scotland are ignored completely. Oddly enough, this preoccupation with natural things comes out most sharply when the film deals with Aberdeen, the main town in the area. Apart from a lovely shot from the sea, the camera fails to do justice to the stern and individual beauty of the town or to the Aberdonians themselves. One feels that Eldridge quails before the dourness of the place and is anxious to get back to the lovely coast line and pastures. •

North-East Corner will be successful because of its beauty and restfulness, and it deserves wide theatrical distribution. But however necessary it may be to maintain the lyrical side of documentary film making which this and other films in the Pattern of Britain series do so admirably, one misses the sense of social importance.

Turn It Out. *Production*: Greenpark for C O I. *Producer and Director*: Ken Annakin. *Photography*: Charlie Marlborough. *Distribution*: C.F.L. 10 mins.

This film sets out to deal with the problem of exports from the point of view of the industrial worker, and is intended primarily for theatrical distribution. It aims to show that an increase in the availability of consumer goods depends upon increased production of export commodities.

Annakin's main intention has obviously been to introduce humour and humanity into a subject which is rapidly becoming hackneyed to the point of boredom. He has used the method of personal reporting, and the audience is treated to shots of Annakin at the factory, at the docks, in the queues, interviewing housewives and shop

(*continued on page* 78)

The Overlanders. Ealing Studios. *Producer*: Michael Balcon. *Written and directed by* Harry Watt. *Photography*: Osmond Borradaile. *Music*: John Ireland. *Distribution*: Eagle-Lion. 89 mins.

When Cedric Belfrage was the film critic on the *Sunday Express* he could tell after seeing the first few minutes of a film the rest of the story in detail. There are most likely a few critics who could do the same today, for of the thousands of films that are made few vary but superficially from the standard four-finger exercises. Don't blame the technicians, the writers and directors —blame rather the renters who would about as soon fill in their income-tax returns correctly as risk anything that was new—anything without a precedent. The renters of course ultimately control which films are made and which are not. It is rumoured that the renters of *The Overlanders* were very glum after they had first seen their charge. Not only did they think the film was poor, but they were quite sure that audiences would agree with them and stay away in numbers. A big-shot renter makes anything up to twenty or thirty thousand a year and is paid this large lump of dough because he knows what kind of films people want to see. You can draw your own conclusions, but *The Overlanders* will be one of the first ten British money-makers of 1946. It deserves to be, because everything about the film is fresh and new, it is a good story and it is told humorously, excitingly and convincingly. This is the first time you have seen people or heard people like Chips Rafferty and Corky, the girl and her father and mother. They are not the usual old studio clothes-horses playing yet another part, in yet another costume. The overlanders are individuals with recognizable human qualities. They are not just good or bad. Sometimes they are low in spirit and are willing to give up their project out of sheer despondency. Sometimes they are full of spirit and the obstacles seem easy. Sometimes they hate each other. Sometimes they love each other. Two characters in particular deserve special mention, Jackie and Nipper. Usually coloured people are treated in films as either comic, stupid or wicked. In this one they are in many ways the brains behind the journey. When difficulties are met they are always consulted and it is usually their advice that is taken. Between them and Chips Rafferty there is understanding, and, when other members of the team are uncertain, the coloured men back Chips's confidence with good sense.

With one or two very minor exceptions the film is a winner, but after seeing it you will wonder at the terrific amount of hard grind that must have gone into it by the director and everyone else concerned. Every sequence is covered so completely that, although the editing must have been a pleasure—the shooting, what with cows and horses and heat must have been a major labour. Despite all the handicaps the film is as polished and smooth as any studio production; with special mention for photography.

Perhaps the most important thing though that *The Overlanders* has done is to open up an entirely new type of film-making. Everywhere there are similar stories waiting to be made, but made in the same way that *The Overlanders* was made, not dolled up with artificial story and stars, but made with real people on the spot.

Apology. R. E. Tritton, Director of the Films Division of the Central Office of Information, points out that two films reviewed in the last issue of D.N.L., *Old Wives' Tales* and *Your Children and You*, should have been credited to C.O.I. as sponsor as well as distributor. We apologise.

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THE FIRST DAYS OF DOCUMENTARY

By Sir Stephen Tallents, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.B.E.

These extracts from the Cobb Lecture, delivered at the Royal Society of Arts in November, 1946, are reprinted by permission of the Editor of the Society's journal. In them Sir Stephen Tallents tells for the first time the inside story of the beginning of documentary. It is to Tallents that documentary owes the greatest debt, since it was through his efforts that finance, facilities, and, above all, freedom to experiment were achieved. His description of the earlier battles in Whitehall will make interesting reading in parallel with Forsyth Hardy's book, 'Grierson on Documentary'.

NO MOVEMENT, I should be prepared to wager, has ever had a more clearly defined birthplace than that of the British documentary film, and the nursing home in which it first saw the light was Mr Amery's room at the Dominions Office on the morning of April 27th, 1928. Six men were present at that accouchement, of whom five are still living—Mr Amery, Mr Walter Elliot, Sir John Craig (now Deputy Master and Comptroller of the Royal Mint and Engraver of His Majesty's Seals), Mr John Grierson and I. None of them it is safe to say, saw just what would come of that meeting. But some of us at least felt that it was important. I—partly because it had amused me, but partly also because I felt it was significant—made a detailed note of it at the time; and, as I have seldom done with the record of an official meeting, I kept the note. I will describe what passed at the birth presently—and this is perhaps the moment to warn you that my talk will deal more with the history of the early documentary film movement than with its latest developments or its future prospects. It is always better to speak of what one knows first hand. But before I tell the story of the birth, let me recall briefly how that bedside meeting came about.

Mr Amery was Chairman of the Empire Marketing Board. Mr Walter Elliot was Chairman of its Film Committee. I was the Board's Secretary. Very early in our work we had been impressed with the opportunity, which cinema presented, for bringing the Empire alive to the imagination of the public. One summer afternoon in 1926—the first summer of our work—I had driven to lunch with Mr Rudyard Kipling in his house at Burwash. Mr Kipling, who had so far fought shy of the films, confirmed our belief in the possibilities of cinema and held out hopes that he would himself guide the making of a film for us. This seemed to me a magnificent opening. I had little difficulty in persuading my Board to pursue it. I had much more difficulty in selling the idea to an extremely sceptical Treasury. In the end, however, I got leave to employ a man named by Mr Kipling as particularly suited to work with him; and we embarked on a film of fancy called *One Family*, which began gloriously with shots of society ladies impersonating the different Dominions in the Throne Room at Buckingham Palace and ended its career less happily after a week's run in the Palace Theatre. In justice to its maker, I should add that he produced, as a by-product of his big film, a particularly charming short film, *Southern April*, which Miss Lejeune praised on its appearance as an example of 'what lovely things can be done with a camera and a microphone by a man both of sensibility and idea'.

While *One Family* was still in embryo, a man called at my office one morning with a letter of introduction from Robert Nichols, the poet, which described my caller as having ideas in harmony with those which I had discussed with the writer. My caller gave his name as John Grierson. I found that, after service in minesweepers during the war, he had gone out to the United States as a fellow of the Rockefeller Foundation and had there studied psychology in terms of American cinema. He had never as yet himself made a film. I took to Grierson at once, and felt that here was a man that we needed and must enlist in the service of the EMB. I cannot say with equal truth that I fully grasped at that first interview the theories which he expounded to me. For their full comprehension I would refer you to that interesting book, *Grierson on Documentary*, which Mr Forsyth Hardy has lately edited and in which he has gathered Grierson's writings and talks from 1926 till almost the present day. But I think I can briefly summarize what Grierson was thinking at that time. He was shocked at the meagre content of community life everywhere. Its enrichment depended, he thought, on a better understanding of the stuff of which it was compounded. That better understanding could not be secured by the orthodox methods of academic education. 'Education,' he was to say of the public a few years ago, 'has given them facts but has not sufficiently given them faith.' It was necessary to touch the imaginations of the people—not merely to impart facts to them; and their imaginations could best be touched by eliciting and presenting to them in a dramatized form the exciting material which he found in the real life around him.

With *One Family* on the stocks, I could not hope to get the Treasury at that stage to allow us to employ a second film officer. But one of the great virtues of the EMB was that we had a certain discretion to spend money for experimental purposes. I therefore commissioned Grierson to prepare a series of memoranda on the use of the film in other countries. He produced memoranda showing in particular how the non-theatrical distribution of films was going ahead in France and Germany. He also suggested that we should arrange, in the cinema that the EMB had lately installed at the Imperial Institute, a series of private showings of significant films.

Grierson by now was thirsting to try out his ideas in the actual making of a film. We, our minds convinced by his conversation and our eyes opened by what we had seen at the Imperial Institute, were anxious that he should have that

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opportunity. But the Treasury sought to overrule a recommendation of the Board taken at a meeting at which they had not troubled to be represented. Mr Amery rebelled; and the result was the meeting in his room which I mentioned at the outset.

Our plans for this film had not been laid without guile. It was, by common consent, time that the EMB did something for home fisheries. Grierson had served during the 1914 war in minesweepers. Mr Arthur Michael Samuel, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, had studied the history of the English herring fisheries, and had committed his learning to a book, *The Herring: Its Effect on the History of Britain*. Mr Samuel opened our meeting with a salvo. As a director of Apollinaris, he knew much about advertising; and he could assure us that it was sheer waste of money to think of increasing the sale of Empire products by films. Mr Walter Elliot and Mr Amery, in that order, explained that this was to be a background film, designed to create an atmosphere by presenting English life and character. Then we dangled our herring bait in front of the Financial Secretary. Mr Amery explained firmly that responsibility rested with the EMB and with himself acting after he had received their advice. The meeting ended with Mr Samuel genially offering to help us with his deep knowledge of the history of herrings and ourselves all warmly welcoming his offer. The voice of the official Treasury insisted, as a postscript to our conference, that one 'semi-expert' and one office man should be sufficient for our needs.

It was a very modest enterprise on which we thus embarked. But then, as Grierson once wrote—'If the Civil Service or any other public service must have its illegitimate infants, it is best to see that they are small ones'. But the decision to embark, you will have noted, involved two top-rank Cabinet Ministers; and the making of the film created, I am sure, agonies as sharp as ever attended the making of, say, Eisenstein's Mexican film or *Caesar and Cleopatra*. A drifter, the 'Maid of Thule', was hired at Stornoway, chiefly on the strength of her crew's supposed photogenic quality. John Skeaping designed a cabin set, which was erected near the harbour. A fisheries protection cruiser obliged with power for the lighting. The under-water scenes were supplied by dogfish chivvying small roach about a tank on the Plymouth Marine Biological Station. Then the 'Maid of Thule' couldn't find the herrings, and operations had to be transferred to another drifter at Lowestoft. Next the chairman of the company, with whom a contract had been made for the film's production, turned up in my room one evening with a long face to declare that it was a predestined flop and had better be abandoned. That was one of the real crises of my official life. But I left Grierson to deal with him. Production was resumed. On November 10th, 1929, the Film Society put on *Drifters* in a programme with *Potemkin*, and it won much applause in the theatre and praise thereafter from a number of the critics.

We might at this point have embarked Grierson on a succession of films in the manner of *Drifters*. We were certainly tempted to do so. In fact, on his advice, we refrained. We set ourselves to build up a school of documentary producers and to develop a non-theatrical system of distribution.

(Reprinted from the 'Journal of the Royal Society of Arts', December 20th, 1946.)

EGYPT *(continued from page 71)*

Egyptian features makes it obvious that too little time is spent on story, on shooting script and on preparation. This criticism is made, too, by the best Egyptian directors and producers, and it is worth noting that Egypt's finest director, Ustaz Niazi Moustapha, has not only made a close study of film techniques as developed in Germany and Russia as well as America, but also devotes an immense amount of time to scripting and preparation. But he, and a few others, are exceptions.

It is difficult for an outsider to judge acting quality, since an Arab audience is likely to have different tastes and standards from our own. One factor emerges, however, as a parallel to some aspects of Hollywood, and that is the immense popularity of the singer (whether he or she can act or not). There is a great deal of singing in Egyptian films, and at this time there is, too, an interesting development in style, by which Eastern and Western music is being combined in a not unattractive manner. For the rest, a few visits to Cairo cinemas provide too little evidence about general techniques. The impression received was that actors tend to be either over-melodramatic or too stilted in voice or gesture. But again there are notable exceptions such as Amina Nour el Dine, who, given a first-class story and director, could challenge a large number of Hollywood females very successfully.

Most people in the Egyptian industry are convinced that the present boom must inevitably break, and very soon. The general opinion is that the best production companies will weather the storm, and that in a market free from glut there will be an all-round improvement in story, style and technique.

Amongst these forward-looking groups are a number of people who would like to see a tie-up with Western production on an exchange or mutual-service basis. With this in mind they look to France, and possibly England, rather than to the United States.

There is virtually no documentary production in Egypt. The reason for this is not unusual. There is no commercial basis; and neither Government nor private enterprise has yet entered the field of sponsorship.

On the other hand, the interest in documentary is very great. It is not without significance that at least three Government Departments—Public Health, Social Welfare and Education—are using visual aids, including films, and are deeply anxious to expand their activities, since in a country like Egypt, with a high percentage of illiteracy, the film can do much in functional and urgent campaigns in, say, the combat against bilharzia, tuberculosis and malaria. So far, however, very little money has been granted from public funds, and work has been limited accordingly.

Given the right financial basis, however, there is no doubt that documentary films could play a big part in the Egyptian Government's present campaign 'against poverty, ignorance and disease'. Taking an overall view of the industry, with its large productive capacity, its young and growing army of technicians, and the endless subject-possibilities of the country, it looks as though Egypt, whatever current problems may have to be faced, is likely to become a film-making force of considerable importance.

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NEW FILMS

(*continued from page 75*)

stewards, and in general acting as a sort of 'Alf's Button' genie, wafting the audience from location to location in pursuit of his argument. Purists will say that the direction of this film owes more to 'Hellzapoppin' than to the documentary tradition, and they may be right. In at least one sequence Annakin goes too far and becomes ludicrous rather than amusing. Nevertheless the instructional sequence on the relation between exports and consumer goods is clear and convincing. A further important aspect of the film is that it does not beg the question of increased production but poses the need for equal pay, the necessity for the continuation of joint production procedure, etc.

This should be a useful film to show in the cinemas. Some of us may be disturbed by the sight of Ken Annakin's homely face appearing through a pair of gaudy curtains and, surrounded by tennis racquets, haranguing us on why we should produce more. But, maybe, that just indicates an oversensitivity about the dignity of documentary directors.

This Modern Age series. No. 1. Homes for All. No. 2. Scotland Yard. *Producer*: Sergei Nolbandov. *Associate Producer and Literary Editor*: George Ivan Smith. *Distribution*: G.F.D. 20 mins. each film.

J. Arthur Rank's latest contribution to the screen takes the form of a topical monthly review, the first two issues of which have now been released. The standard they have set warrants a sincere welcome to the series.

Homes For All is a detailed study of the housing problem and of the progress being made towards its solution. While not an exciting film to look at, it compensates for somewhat dreary pictures by the invigorating honesty and conviction of its argument. *Scotland Yard*, a dramatized essay on how the police are coping with the crime wave, is a much more lively film to watch and retains the honest treatment of *Homes for All*. Apart from showing the machinery and methods used by the police, it brings home the point that the responsibility for increased crime rests to a large extent on those citizens who patronize the black market.

In presenting a series dealing with topical and controversial subjects the producers have taken upon themselves a social responsibility of great importance. If they maintain their present outspoken policy it will provide a very useful service for the cinema-going public.

The Railwaymen. Crown Film Unit for Ministry of Transport and C.O.I. *Producer:* Alex Shaw. *Director:* R. Q. McNaughton. *Photography:* Teddy Catford. *Music*: Temple Abady. *Distribution:* C.F.L. Non-T. 23 mins.

This is another film in the 'vocational guidance' series, and, as its title implies, it shows the numerous jobs that are available on the railways. The contributions of drivers, firemen, platelayers, stationmasters, porters, signalmen, and many other grades are fitted into the general pattern of railway organization and some attempt is made to indicate wage rates, conditions and chances of promotion. When it deals with the latter considerations the film seems a little unhappy, as well it might, for railway wages are not such as to create a stampede for jobs. Per-

haps because of this difficulty, the film tends to dwell more than necessary on the thrills and romance that trains invariably excite in most people. The small boy collecting engine numbers is finally kicked off the station by a porter who has the same vice (presumably it takes his mind off his wages!).

The Railwaymen possesses the overall technical competence we associate with the Crown Film Unit. There is one particularly good sequence of the workshops and the musical score is first rate. If it fails to attract new workers to the railways, that is not the fault of the film, which does its particular job to the best of its ability.

MEDICAL FILMS

(*continued from page* 70)

And what of the amateurs, eclipsed in 1939? The indications are that they are coming back to pick up the threads where they left off, but greatly strengthened by the wide demand for films which this war has brought about. They used to be doubtful of themselves—films in teaching were an experiment—but the war experience has justified their enthusiasm, for what soldier has not been taught complicated techniques by films, and don't they know it? And what is more, their opinion is backed by scientifically designed psychological testing experiments. A technique so useful for soldiers will be equally useful for students. But slapdash technique is dead; impromptu camera-pointing is gone for ever. Hospitals and universities are already officially supporting these small film units, run by enthusiasts who know their photography, their medicine, and their curriculum; units which are going to make films to meet the local demand, and send copies to other centres if asked.

But so far we have only considered production; the film when finished must be made available as widely as possible, for the hospital-unit film will often cost £50–£250 even if the time of the staff involved is left out of account, and it will be impossible as well as wasteful for any one centre to make itself all the films it needs. A centralized catalogue is necessary, giving details of all the films already existing, and kept constantly up to date as new films are made; this work is now being undertaken by the Royal Society of Medicine in conjunction with the Scientific Film Association, and publication is expected to begin early in 1947. A central library is needed to house the finished films, for it will be immediately obvious that it is more convenient to borrow films from a central point than from a number of scattered places. But that, a matter of convenience, is of no great importance; what is far more important is that the film, both before and after projection, should be examined and, when necessary, cleaned or repaired; for if the film is not properly looked after, its life is shortened and it may break during projection, which causes much annoyance to the audience. This 'film-maintenance' is a skilled job requiring specially trained staff and machinery, and the expense of keeping up such a staff is not justified in a small library. So it is in the interest of all small libraries to pool resources to maintain an adequate inspection service for their films. It seems likely if they prove to be in great demand they will be passed over to the Central Film Library

The Horizon Film Unit

(In association with the Film Producers' Guild Ltd.)

has completed the following films in 1946:—

'Picture Paper' (C.O.I.—Informational, abroad)

'Calling All Drivers' (Parts 1, 2 & 3) (C.O.I.—Instructional)

'Plan for a Foundry' (Ford—Informational)

'Gold Coast Journey' (Cadbury—Background educational)

'Tools for the Job' (Ford—Dealer instructional)

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The Horizon Film Unit is at present producing films on a variety of subjects including flying, agriculture and industry.

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Other films in production will be announced when completed. Applications for the loan of these films should be made to the Central Film Library, Imperial Institute, London, S.W.7

for distribution; for the CFL has special facilities for distributing large numbers of copies of any one film (it is well to remember that they hold the largest collection of general medical films in Great Britain, for the MoI, MoH, British Council and ICI films are there).

So much for distribution. Now we come to planning. First, a survey of the films available must be made; this is being done at the RSM as has already been mentioned. Next, they must be reviewed and their teaching value assessed; this task is already being undertaken by the SFA. After that, an attempt must be made to discover what subjects teachers most desire to be covered by films; this has been done by the Medical Committee of the Scientific Film Association, whose report has been published. Lastly, a system must be brought into being to ensure that, wherever possible, no two units are making a film of the same subject without being aware of each other's activities; this problem also is being tackled by the Medical Committee of the SFA who invite units contemplating making films to notify them well in advance; when two units are found to be overlapping on the same subject they are, if they agree to it, notified of each other's activities and so enabled to co-ordinate their production scheme to the benefit of both.

That, very briefly, is the history of the medical teaching film in Great Britain. I have shown that it is only in the last few years that film has received more than our passing attention and accordingly the number of good films at present available for teaching is small. I have shown that, nevertheless, the demand is increasing from within the profession rather than from outside pressure, and that, indeed, outside production sources are so sporadic and uncertain that our profession is spontaneously setting up small production units of its own. It now remains to see how this experience compares with that in other branches of teaching and learning.

It can be said immediately that our experience is not unique. Film as a method of teaching is in demand in all walks of life. It seems certain that the use of the film for teaching soldiers, fireguards, dockers and aeroplane builders in the war years has shown both teacher and pupil that here is a powerful technique. But it is equally certain that, whether the war experience has intensified this experience or not, it has certainly not caused it; the demand from the public before the war years was steadily rising; any factual film could be certain of enthusiastic reception from a rapidly increasing audience, and this demand is real and spontaneous to the extent that in spite of reaction from possibly a majority of teachers, the use of film in schools is now talked of as an accomplished fact, awaiting only the manufacture of sufficient projectors. There is, therefore, a wide field opening before us. In medicine the only subject on which there is already a usable selection of films is anaesthesia, so we start with a virtually clean slate. We should make sure that in our enthusiasm we do not respond with a flood of worthless films, many duplicating each other. The demand is great, the resources small; we must use them to best advantage, We should avoid dictation; we should avoid the superplanners stifling our enthusiasm and initiative; we should above all ensure that unpopular or unproven techniques can still be published in film form, we must in fact, maintain the 'freedom of the cinema'. But we should also be intelligent in our desire to maintain freedom; we must co-operate. We should pool resources, technical and financial, and we should make our results, the films, available to all who need them, regardless of whether they are a rich school or a poor one. We need a block government grant, administered by the teachers, to which is added the financial resources of smaller groups and from which any group may draw funds to finance a film programme which a majority agree is needed. It seems reasonable to do this on a regional basis; for a given university to draw up a film programme covering a broad subject area—say, elementary midwifery or medical (as opposed to surgical) disorders of infancy; another university would draw up a complementary programme, e.g. advanced midwifery or surgical disorders of infancy; the two universities would criticize each other's programmes, eliminate overlap, add sections that the other requires, and then these integrated programmes would be submitted for the approval of the financing body. They would be integrated on a broader basis, into obstetrics and gynaecology or paediatrics, and then the money allocated and production undertaken regionally by the University Film Unit for simple films or by a professional unit for the more complex films. Such a scheme would prevent much overlap, duplication and worthless production; but it need not hold up production; for it is immediately obvious that films on some subjects are imperative, and for these the finance body could allocate a grant immediately.

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THEATRE

(*continued from page* 73)

mentioning music I am reminded that *Lucrèce*, the play from which this article started, gave the basic text for his most recent opera to Benjamin Britten, the composer in *Coalface* and *Night Mail*.

The attempt to bring a wider world on the stage is the clue, I think, to the influence of documentary in the theatre. Just as the important effect of documentary on the feature film is seen best in films like *Millions Like Us*, *The Overlanders* and *The Way Ahead*, which bring new matter to the argument, new breadth to the camera's vision, new stories to the screen, so I suspect we shall see documentary's influence in the theatre in more subtle ways than the extension of the 'Living Newspaper' technique. My own guess for what it is worth is that the future is not with the 'Living Newspaper'; its weakness is implied in its name, it takes too general a purview to be long-lived. Films and plays are long-term media: the short-term and the topical are best left to the radio, except in circumstances that may, of course, recur, like those in which the ABCA play-unit flourished. This unit has indeed been recently touring Reunion Theatre's generalized 'Living Newspaper,' *Exercise Bowler* in Germany; and an ambitious company of players and dancers from the North, Theatre Workshop, has had some success with a dance-mime and documentary play *Uranium* 235. Thus there is evidence against my guess, but I stick to it. I believe the influence of documentary in the theatre and elsewhere is to turn the attention of writers to new stories and sharper ways of telling them, 'with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature'.

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